

On the drafting Board: Repeal the Seal

by Lee Schwartz

Architect: One who drafts a plan of your house, and plans a draft of your money." — Ambrose Bierce

S taying true to form, the architects of American Institute of Architects/Michigan (AIA) pulled the rug out from under yet another "negotiated" agreement prior to the summer recess. This is in keeping with the architects' standard tactic of holding endless discussions and talking the issue to death.

The architect's special twist to this maneuver is to reach an agreement in principle or on paper and then, as the legislative process starts, to back off the previous agreement and say that a new agreement is necessary.

A new agreement always means a whole new round of discussions, usually spaced far apart. This allows the architects to stall the process until it is too late to pass a bill during the current session. Then during the next session the entire song and dance starts again. If the parties to the original negotiation won't sit back down and renegotiate, the architects accuse them of "breaking the agreement."

A smoke screen of "bad faith" or "misrepresentation of the facts and discussions" accusations by the architects and their representatives serve to cloud the issue even further until the legislators throw up their hands in disgust and refuse to deal with the bill in question.

House Bill 4535, introduced this session by Representative Mike Griffin (D-Jackson) was intended to serve as a vehicle bill for interior designers to create a new exemption to the architect seal requirements. After lengthy discussion spanning over a year, the architects and interior designers recognized a solution and wrote language to implement that solution. HB 4535 was modified in committee to include this language. The bill was unanimously reported from the committee.

After the bill had reached the House floor and was poised for action, the

architects ran their favorite play. They called the House leadership and the chair of the committee and informed them that they were no longer supporting the deal they had reached just a week or two ago. Instead the architects wanted the bill held on the floor over the summer while a whole new round of talks and discussions on a new compromise would take place.

Well, the summer is over and the time for action has arrived. Representatives of the architects were kind enough to offer to sit down and talk about this issue "until we can reach agreement, no matter how long it takes", an offer that the MAHB can and did refuse. Over seven years of "talking" with the architects about this issue is enough.


With the latest reversal of position by AIA/Michigan, some legislators are becoming irritated at their persistent inability to hold fast to agreements they make. It is counterproductive to get the reputation of an organization whose word means nothing.

Last session State Senator Mike Rogers (R-Brighton) watched the architects do the dalliance dance (twirl to the left, twirl to the right, keep them going in circles if it takes all night). This year the honor has been accorded to Representatives Griffin and House Regulatory Affairs Committee Chair Ilona Varga (D-Detroit). Indications are this fall, a number of legislators are prepared to "cut in" and change the tempo of this dance.

Lest anyone think this is about public safety as the architects claim, remember that the December, 1995 issue of *AIArchitect* listed as the AIA's Top Issues for 1996 Legislative Sessions' legislation "... dealing with definitions of architectural practice or the overlap of architecture and engineering under state licensing laws". The AIA article applauds architects' efforts ... "to oppose (others) rights to design buildings." It is about the welfare of the architects.

The aim of the MAHB is simple: **Repeal the Seal.**

No square footage requirements. No complexity requirements. No if, ands or

butts. State-licensed builders who are planning, designing or directing the construction of a single-family home should not be required to have an architect, engineer or land surveyor seal their plans. It's time to repeal the seal! 

Education & Events

November 5 - Art Cornwell
"Developing Your Marketing Strategy"
Lansing Sheraton

November 6 - MAHB Fall Board
Lansing Sheraton

November 17 - Energy Smart Seminar
Oakland Community College
Royal Oak (call 248-544-5573)
Fax #

December 3-4 - MAHB Leadership Training - East Lansing Marriott

December 8 - MAHB / NCI Associates Remodelers Business Planning Teleconference

January 8 - Legislative Day
Holiday Inn West, Lansing

January 16-19, 1998 - NAHB Convention - Dallas, TX

February 6 - Cure for the Common Callback - Lansing Community College (call 517-377-0422)

February 19-21 - MAHB Winter Convention - Kellogg Center East Lansing

March 8 - NAHB President and E.O. Day

March 9-10 - NAHB Legislative Conference - Washington D.C.

March 10-12 - MAHB / Wickes Lumber "Blueprint For Success"
Kalamazoo, Gaylord, Novi

For further information on these or other events please call 1-800-748-0432